

BOOK NOTICES

HELEN PICKERING. 2006. **Wildflowers of Mombacho, Nicaragua: Flores Silvestres del Mombacho.** (ISBN 1-889878-14-6, pbk.). *Sida, Botanical Miscellany* 28. Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 509 Pecan Street, Fort Worth, TX 76102-4060, U.S.A. (**Orders:** www.britpress.org, <http://www.brit.org/Sida/Sida28.htm>, 817-332-4441 ext. 32). \$15.00, 217 pp., 500 + color photographs, 6½" × 8½".

Volcán Mombacho and its associated National Park are in southwestern Nicaragua, about 30 miles south of Managua, near the town of Granada. The guide covers the whole of Volcán Mombacho (now dormant but with fumarolic fields and hot springs over a large area) including both the evergreen, humid forest between 800 meters and the crest at 1345 meters and the dry, deciduous forest below 800 meters. If the scope of the book were limited to this small area, it might be of limited interest, because relatively few will be able to visit the park. But the majority of plants covered occur in similar habitats throughout Central America and about one-third are widely distributed in the tropics. For the tropically challenged (including me) this is a wonderful volume—use it as a review of families and genera (even species, since many of them are widespread) or as an introduction to Central American plant diversity.

200 species in 174 genera, 63 families, are included (below). The species are first divided by color, then alphabetically by genus and species. For each species, there are two or three excellent photos, often including fruits and habit. "Descriptions and information on habitat and flowering periods are taken from the Flora of Nicaragua, published by the Missouri Botanical Garden in 2001."

Acanthaceae (6 genera, 6 species), Agavaceae (1, 1), Amaranthaceae (6, 6), Apocynaceae (3, 3), Araceae (5, 6), Asclepiadaceae (2, 2), Asteraceae (24, 34), Begoniaceae (1, 1), Bignoniaceae (1, 1), Boraginaceae (3, 3), Brassicaceae (2, 2), Bromeliaceae (4, 7), Campanulaceae (2, 2), Cannaceae (1, 1), Caprifoliaceae (1, 1), Clethraceae (1, 1), Clusiaceae (1, 1), Commelinaceae (5, 5), Convolvulaceae (1, 2), Costaceae (1, 1), Cucurbitaceae (2, 2), Cyperaceae (2, 3), Ericaceae (2, 2), Euphorbiaceae (5, 5), Fabaceae (s.l.) (7, 7), Flacourtiaceae (1, 1), Gesneriaceae (3, 3), Haemodoraceae (1, 1), Heliconiaceae (1, 2), Lamiaceae (1, 2), Loganiaceae (1, 1), Malpighiaceae (1, 1), Malvaceae (3, 4), Marantaceae (2, 2), Margraviaceae (1, 1), Melastomataceae (7, 7), Meliaceae (1, 1), Menispermaceae (1, 1), Moraceae (1, 1), Myrinaceae (1, 1), Myrtaceae (2, 2), Nyctaginaceae (1, 2), Orchidaceae (13, 16), Oxalidaceae (1, 1), Palmae (1, 1), Papaveraceae (2, 2), Passifloraceae (1, 1), Phytolaccaceae (2, 2), Piperaceae (1, 1), Poaceae (1, 1), Polygalaceae (1, 1), Rubiaceae (10, 10), Scrophulariaceae (2, 2), Solanaceae (5, 8), Sterculiaceae (1, 1), Tiliaceae (1, 1), Turneraceae (1, 1), Ulmaceae (1, 1), Urticaceae (2, 2), Verbenaceae (6, 6), Vitaceae (1, 1), Zingiberaceae (2, 2), Zygophyllaceae (1, 1).—Guy L. Nesom, *Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 509 Pecan Street, Fort Worth, TX 76102-4060, U.S.A.*

LYNN COULTER. 2006. **Gardening with Heirloom Seeds: Tried-and-True Flowers, Fruits, and Vegetables for a New Generation.** (ISBN 0-8078-5680-0, pbk.). University of North Carolina Press, P.O. Box 2288, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2288, U.S.A. (**Orders:** www.uncpress.unc.edu, 919-966-3561, 919-966-3829 fax). \$22.50, 316 pp., color photographs, 8" × 9".

Gardening with Heirloom Seeds: Tried-and-True Flowers, Fruits, and Vegetables for a New Generation is a journey into the world of heirloom gardening. Heirloom plants are cultivated species that are at least 50 years old. Many are easier to grow and more disease-resistant than modern cultivars. The often taste better, as well. In this "sampler for heirloom seeds" Lynn Coulter describes 50 heirloom seed varieties in loving detail. Most can be grown in anywhere in the United States, but some are better suited to the warmer climate of the South, where the author makes her home. The plants are organized by gardening season: spring through winter. This paperback edition is generously illustrated with gorgeous color photographs of garden plants and color images from vintage out-of-print seed catalogs. A favorite of mine is the photograph of "Moon and Stars" watermelons, which have blue rinds spotted with yellow "stars" just like the night sky. Personal stories about the joy and meaning in heirloom seed gardening, seed saving, and seed swapping are interesting. In addition, useful gardening advice and spaces for notes are also included, along with resources for heirloom seeds and gardens. Apart from the joy that gardeners derive from growing unusual heirloom varieties, heirloom seeds have another value. They broaden the genetic diversity of the plants in our modern food supply, which is important in avoiding disasters like the Irish potato famine.—Marissa N. Oppel, MS, *Collections and Research Assistant, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, TX, 76102-4060, U.S.A.*